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SUBJECT: FM PETERS' COMMENTS ON THE US-NZ RELATIONSHIP: NZ MEDIA REPORTS

11. SUMMARY: In recent comments Foreign Minister Peters has made to the NZ media he describes America as a "wonderful country" and says he is "glad that America leads the free world."

Minister Peters says he hopes the bilateral relationship can be improved, but he cautions New Zealanders against elevated expectations of deliverables from his upcoming visit to the United States.

He also denies any anti-American sentiment behind his release of National Party emails. END SUMMARY

ON HIS VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES:

12. On June 3, 2006, Minister Peters was on Agenda TV, New Zealand's only long-format political interview program. He was asked directly to sum up his attitude regarding the United States.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

Interviewer: So what's your own view of America then?

Minister Peters: I think America's an amazing, wonderful country. It is many countries in many ways; it has its problems, but I'm glad that America leads the free world and not some other country. END TRANSCRIPT.

ON HIS UPCOMING VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES:

13. During the television interview and in media reports of his appearance before a parliamentary select committee, the Minister said he sought a "better relationship with the United States" but cautioned against "hype" and New Zealanders' elevated hopes of his upcoming visit to the United States.

The Agenda TV interviewer, Lisa Owen, sought his view on the likely results of his upcoming U.S. visit:

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

Interviewer: So generally speaking, what would you want to come out of a meeting; you say you don't want to go with no results, so what would the result be that you'd be looking for?

Minister Peters: Well, first of all we've had 21 years of what is largely a stalemate; it's time to move these things forward, and I have my own private views. I share them with my officers as to what is achievable in 2006 and beyond; and rather than hype them up and make all sorts of statements against which people are going to try and measure this after 21 years of a stalemate, I'm going to try to get on as the All Blacks do -- let the rugby do the talking and let the policy do the talking in this case.

Interviewer: Would you like to meet with George W. Bush?

Minister Peters: I don't intend to meet with George W. Bush; that's not what one would expect as Foreign Minister. That is a prime

ministerial visit; I'll stick with the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. END TRANSCRIPT

14. The June 23, 2006, edition of New Zealand Herald (New Zealand's largest circulation daily, Auckland-based) reported comments Minister Peters made about the bilateral relationship during a select committee hearing.

BEGIN TEXT: Questioned on his visit next month to the United States, Mr. Peters said he did not want to beat it up beforehand.

"I intend to go at the time that I judge it appropriate and to ensure that we, as a consequence, have a better relationship with the United States.

"It has been my observation over many years that some Foreign Ministers have done a marvelous job, to quote my former colleague Mike Moore, [and] "spent their time around those parts of the world pulling on doors marked 'push.'" END TEXT

The Herald also reported Minister Peters saying:

BEGIN TEXT:

On the United States: "I don't want to elevate New Zealanders' hopes without having the clear capacity to get a result in that area." END TEXT

15. The June 23, 2006, edition of the Dominion Post (Wellington-based, second-largest nationwide circulation) reported the same parliamentary hearing under the headline, "Confident Peters Steals the Show," noting that "Winston Peters swept up to his first grilling as foreign affairs minister, flashed his trademark grin, and declared, 'It's show-time.'"

BEGIN TEXT: The questioning quickly turned to the United States and

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when Mr Peters -- who showed off his US-friendly credentials by sporting Congressional cufflinks -- hoped to visit and what he wanted to achieve. END TEXT

After reporting the same comments as above regarding former NZ foreign ministers and ensuring a better relationship with the US, the Dominion Post went on to report:

BEGIN TEXT: Mr. McCully [National Party Foreign Affairs spokesperson] tried again. Mr. Peters said the timing of his visit was a matter of diaries, but talks with US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill gave hope the relationship could be improved. However, he did not want to raise expectations without "having the clear capacity to get a result." END TEXT

ON HIS RELEASE OF NATIONAL PARTY EMAILS:

16. During the June 3 Agenda TV interview Minister Peters underscored that there was no anti-American intent to his release of National Party emails regarding employing American strategists to work on the National Party campaign for the last election.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

Interviewer: Well, you did in recent times release this Don Brash email, which obviously showed that the National Party had been having talks with American strategists. How do you see that fitting in with your role as Foreign Affairs Minister? Because some people suggested that there was an anti-American sentiment attached to that.

Minister Peters: It was utterly wrong; for goodness sake, there's nothing wrong with talking to Canadian political parties, the UK political parties, Australian political parties, or American political parties for that matter. It's when you deny it, that's simply what happened: he denied it. There was no sin in talking to them, I've talked to them; we all have, but we don't deny it. Now the Americans are big enough and strong enough in this robust democracy to understand exactly what this is about; it is not anti-American in any way, shape, or form to point out that someone who wishes to be a leader of the country and a Prime Minister is not telling the truth.

Interviewer: So your motivation in releasing that email was in your mind to show up a dishonesty?

Minister Peters: Precisely -- that's what I did. END TRANSCRIPT

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